

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ALBERTA

Title: **Friday, April 13, 1984 10:00 a.m.**

[The House met at 10 a.m.]

PRAYERS

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

head: **INTRODUCTION OF BILLS**

Bill 222
An Act to Amend the
Blind or Deaf Persons' Rights Act

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 222, An Act to Amend the Blind or Deaf Persons' Rights Act.

This Bill will provide for the temporary care of guide dogs of the visually impaired in Alberta's hospitals.

[Leave granted; Bill 222 read a first time]

Bill 229
An Act to Amend the
Hazardous Chemicals Act

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, I beg leave to introduce Bill 229, An Act to Amend the Hazardous Chemicals Act.

The Act would compel the Minister of the Environment to establish a schedule of hazardous chemicals. It would compel those who possess them to inform the minister, within 30 days, of what they have. It'll further require that the best available technology be used to treat hazardous wastes before storage or disposal.

[Leave granted; Bill 229 read a first time]

head: **TABLING RETURNS AND REPORTS**

MR. HORSMAN: Mr. Speaker, I have the honour to file with the Assembly copies of a special brochure prepared by the government of Alberta to mark the arrival in Alberta today of the special friendship delegation from our sister province of Heilongjiang. This brochure has been circulated to all members of the Assembly, together with flags which have been prepared to mark this occasion, to further heighten Albertans' awareness of the special relationship which has been achieved through the signing of the accord by our Premier and Governor Chen.

I hope hon. members of the Assembly will find the information contained in this brochure to be of very real interest as we are about to embark upon a most exciting occasion in the life of Alberta, the Great Trade Show and Cultural Exhibition of China, and the circus, which will commence tomorrow at Edmonton Northlands. The special friendship delegation is to arrive shortly, and I will be leaving to greet our distinguished visitors within the next hour.

Just before concluding, Mr. Speaker, I'd also like to point out that there is a land gull on the brochure and on the flag. The land gull is a common bird to the province of Alberta and as well, interestingly enough, to all our sister provinces: Hei-

longjiang in the People's Republic of China. Gangweon in the Republic of Korea, and Hokkaido in Japan. I would like to bring that to the attention of members.

head: **INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS**

MRS. FYFE: Mr. Speaker, this morning I have the privilege of introducing 45 grade 6 students from Father Jan school in the city of St. Albert, which is in the St. Albert constituency. They are sitting in the members gallery, accompanied by their teacher Leonie Chugg. I believe they are receiving a French tour. I haven't had an opportunity to meet the students yet, but I will in a few minutes. I ask that they stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, it's my pleasure to introduce to you and to hon. members of the Assembly some 25 students from John Paul II separate school, located in the town of Stony Plain. They are accompanied by their teachers Brenda Shillington and Ann Lind, and by parent Mrs. Fleming. They are in the members gallery. I ask them to rise and receive the cordial welcome of the House.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, on behalf of Gordon Shrake, the hon. Member for Calgary Millican, who is absent from the Legislature this morning doing good deeds in Calgary on behalf of the government, it's my pleasure to introduce 35 grade 6 students from the Ogden elementary school. They are accompanied by the assistant superintendent of the Calgary southeast area district office. Jim Dean, and by teachers Laura Shuler-Stuijfszand, Maureen Beddome, Gary Deleeuw, Jan Dobbins, Diana Bronner, and Paddy Mullaney — a good bunch of enthusiastic teachers along with the students. I ask members of the House to give a special warm welcome to the students.

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, I have the pleasure of introducing a second class of students, 44 grade 8 students from the Blueberry community school, which is one of the two community schools in the Stony Plain constituency. Between the staff and the community residents, they've done a lot of excellent work there. They are accompanied today by teachers Miss Jolene Burkard and Mr. Laurie Brown, and by bus driver Mr. Ron Bouvier. They are in the public gallery, and I ask them to rise and receive the welcome of the House.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, this morning I have the pleasure of introducing to you, and through you to Members of the Legislative Assembly, a mother who is providing home schooling to her three children. This is not a common method of schooling in the province, but in at least some cases it is certainly a very viable one. I've had the children in my office, and they appear to be thriving on the experience. I have to tell you that Michael, the oldest, is no happier to be learning, at home than if he were learning in school. He's quite candid in admitting that. I'd like you to welcome Mrs. Uta Sjoberg and her children Alanah, Ian, and Michael.

head: **ORAL QUESTION PERIOD****Small Business Assistance**

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to direct my first question to the Premier. It refers to an address to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce in 1974, when he stated that to diversify our economy — it had to do with strengthening small business. I'm sure he will remember. Can the Premier advise the Assembly if there is any planning being developed which might be called a blueprint for action on a small business recovery program?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think the response to that is rather difficult to give in the question period, because it really involves a number of aspects of government policy.

But let me just summarize. Essentially the view we have is that the role of government in terms of small business is first of all, to create stability and encourage activity — and since 1974, clearly that has occurred in a way unparalleled in Canada — and, secondly, to keep down the taxation of small business, and we have done that. I think our corporate tax for small business is the lowest in Canada, with perhaps a minor exception. The situation with regard to general taxation, which is important to small business, is again to have the lowest possible levels.

We've had some new developments with regard to small business: first of all, of course, the questions that I think were discussed in the Legislature yesterday, the effectiveness of the program of interest shielding. In the Speech from the Throne this year, we emphasized two other important areas: privatization, which is particularly important to small business, if they can acquire contracts with the government and operate as small business rather than have it function through government departments; and in our interexchange with small business in the province, we find too that another thrust, both in the budget and in the Speech from the Throne, deals with regulation. We frankly concede that we have a way to go here and that there is pressure on us from small business people to reduce regulations.

The overall approach we have, as mentioned in the hon. member's question relative to my remarks in 1974, is to consider that small business has a major role to play in terms of economic activity. I wasn't sure of the sense of the question, whether it was related to our economic strategy document in the future or to current programming. If it's related to current programming, then perhaps I could clarify it further.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the Premier, coming to a specific area to do with Syncrude Canada. Mr. Premier, I believe a condition of receiving permission from the government to build and operate the Syncrude project was that they had to follow a policy of preference for contracting with Alberta-owned companies, employment of Alberta residents, and the purchase of Alberta manufactured goods. My question to the Premier is, could he confirm that this commitment is being followed?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I believe it certainly was, and the data has been provided in this House. Obviously I don't have it at my fingertips, with regard to the construction elements that were involved in Syncrude. In that area we're constantly monitoring, through the Minister of Economic Development as well as the Minister of Tourism and Small Business, the degree to which organizations such as Syncrude do in fact contract with the private sector.

There are obvious cases, of course, in which the private sector within Alberta is not able to fully service certain specialized areas. And there are other cases in which small business isn't appropriate for the arrangements required, in terms of the efficiency of the operation. But we're prepared to monitor any matters the hon. member may raise where we haven't fully met that objective. Generally speaking, it's the view of the government — and I think the record will show that we've been able to certainly improve upon the position, particularly with regard to Syncrude as compared with the previous project of Suncor.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. Will the Premier confirm that the city of Edmonton, I believe in a

letter dated February 14 this year from the office of the Edmonton Economic Development Authority, questioned the Premier on whether Syncrude was following preferential policy, particularly on the vital factor of Alberta-owned firms? Along with that, can the Premier give the Assembly an assurance that the Alberta-owned company criteria will be followed in all future Syncrude tendering?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I certainly can give the general assurance the hon. member is seeking. That is our policy, and we think the progress has generally been very good. I believe it's something I'd prefer to take notice of for the Minister of Economic Development. My recollection is that he has just completed an assessment that arose from the transmission of the letter the hon. member referred to, and I think he could give the House some useful information with regard to the degree of success in that policy.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the Premier. With the recent \$1.2 billion extension, some contracts have been let at Syncrude. Could the Premier confirm to the House that two of those contracts went to international companies and are not following Alberta bidding?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't have that information at hand. But I would just say that we've never sort of put regulations on Syncrude or any organization that in fact they have to do it in a particular way, because the view of this government is that the result could be a situation of a less efficient enterprise. And certainly an efficient enterprise is important to the province of Alberta if we look at the revenues that flow to the province from our Syncrude investment.

I'd be quite prepared to take notice of that important question and check the contracts if the hon. member wants to let me know them specifically. But I don't know if that's necessary, because I think the Minister of Economic Development will be aware of them and he can report back to the House with regard to those matters in which contracts have been let to international firms, with an explanation as to why, and then we can debate whether the reasons are valid.

MR. MARTIN: My supplementary question would be to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business. Can the minister inform the Assembly if any consideration was given to assessing a recent problem in the city of St. Albert, where the province is starting to construct a \$4.7 million office complex at the same time as a judicial sale of Grandin Park shopping plaza, which includes a six-storey office tower?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I suggest that that be placed on the Order Paper, and I can get some more direction as to the specific concern raised by the hon. member. I can't comment on it at this point.

MR. MARTIN: One final supplementary on this matter. We all agree on the importance of small business. My question to the minister is: would he consider promoting local content requirements in major projects under contract with public or Crown funding involved?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, in response to the question about Alberta content, I think it important to indicate that, relating to projects where we might have some involvement, whether it's the Minister of Public Works, Supply and Services, the Minister of Economic Development, or any of the other ministers of the Crown of the province of Alberta, where all other

factors are equal we ask them to ensure that every effort is made to hire the Alberta manufacturers, construction people, or whomever it may be.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question back to the Premier.

MR. SPEAKER: Is this the second question or a supplementary?

MR. MARTIN: One more supplementary, Mr. Speaker. This week we've tried to point out to the private sector that there are things we think could be done. My question to the Premier is: when is the government going to provide this program of recovery for the private sector, to create jobs and restore consumer confidence? Something has to happen quickly.

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, there are three parts to answering that question. The first part is that I have outlined and could outline in further detail — and I think the budget speech also reflects that — a significant number of programs that relate to economic recovery. Secondly, I want to make it very clear that if you look at the budget speech, in our view the assessment of economic recovery relates to a number of factors in terms of the province of Alberta.

We take the view that we are going to have an overhang of unemployment at the national average in this province for some time, until we get by the overbuilding in the construction area. That is clear. But despite that, this province will have and is having significant economic recovery, in the sense of economic recovery related to a strong province providing security of employment and opportunity for the people currently employed in the province. That is the essence of the position of our government.

If the argument is being made by the hon. member that the test of economic recovery is solely related to the issue of employment, then our answer to that is the following: one, we will be at or below the national average; two, we will continue to have the largest number of people employed in relationship to population. But our basic position is that economic recovery is occurring in this province and, in the course of the recovery, we have to absorb the impact of the large in-migration and the overbuilding in construction. So, two years from now the hon. member can be asking me this question and I will be just as candid as I am today. It is going to take a period of time to work it out.

DR. BUCK: You didn't tell us that in '82, Peter.

MR. LOUGHEED: If the hon. member wants to suggest that there are other ways of doing it, I suggest to him: fine, we will listen to them. But I presume they will be the standard ones, and the standard ones are to expend public money, have a large deficit, and continue on that basis.

Food Banks

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I will go into the second set of questions, and point out that we are talking about the private sector the Premier talked about. My question to the Minister of Social Services and Community Health is with regard to the Premier's statement that 15.1 percent of the people in Edmonton are an overhang. I am sure they will be glad to know that.

My question to the minister has to do with one of the few growth industries in the province, the food banks. The 1983 annual report of Edmonton's Food Bank states:

Greater demands on the "Food Bank's" services were precipitated by cut-backs in Government Social Services allowances directed at the most economically. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. MARTIN: My question. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Order please. I respectfully suggest to the hon. member that, as in all meetings, the Chair be given a reasonable opportunity to intervene when that seems to be necessary.

We have just witnessed a question which is not only a debating question — and I realize we've had some debating answers this morning — but it isn't even the hon. member's own debate; he's quoting somebody else.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary. This is a report given to the minister, and I was just trying to clarify. I was trying to help him out. My question to the ministers. . .

SOME HON. MEMBERS: Question.

MR. MARTIN: Question. Sure, go ahead; ask one.

Has the minister developed any formal response to that 1983 annual report, wherein they made that statement?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I am not in the practice of responding to annual reports unless requested to do so. But I would be happy to comment on food banks and the important role they play relative to volunteer agencies helping people who need assistance. However, I think it's absurd to try to tie that in with social allowance benefits.

The social allowance assistance in this province is second to no province in the country. We did make some adjustments last spring with respect to shelter ceilings, which we have gone over many times in this House. We have monitored the situation closely. There have been special circumstances taken into account for certain individuals with problems, and I think we have responded well to those.

The emphasis has to be, and continue to be, government working together with the volunteer sector of our communities, the community agencies, and families helping families. It is not for government to try to do everything.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question. The unemployed and people at the food banks will be glad to know that everything is the best in the country.

My specific question is: has the minister asked his officials to do any study of whether or not there is a connection between the boom in food banks and the government's social allowance policy?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, in an ongoing way, we look at the different factors that affect the number of people coming onto social allowance. I am sure the people involved with these agencies can express their views with respect to the kinds of people receiving services from them.

Several years ago there was a demand on the services of the men's hostels in both Edmonton and Calgary because of the large number of people moving into and through Alberta at that particular time. The demands for those services are down considerably because of the fact that we don't have people coming into the province the way we did. The food banks we have in Edmonton and Calgary — and I was happy to participate in the opening of one in Calgary on Monday this week — serve

the needs of people who either are not eligible for social allowance or don't make the approach to social allowance. I think it is important that these agencies and us work together in providing an important role to help those who need assistance.

MR. MARTIN: A supplementary question to the minister, Mr. Speaker. In this same Edmonton food bank report, they say that there was a [1,025] percent increase in the number of adults served by the hamper program. Does the minister have any plans in place to relieve the incredible stress on these 1980s soup kitchens?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I can only repeat what I said already in terms of a co-operative effort. In Edmonton, particularly, we have a person working full-time out of the Hys Centre office, working with the inner-city agencies to identify any particular problem areas and work them out. My information from the department and from these inner-city agencies is that this co-operation is going very well. Other than that, Mr. Speaker, I don't know what else I could say.

MR. MARTIN: Perhaps you have said enough, but I will ask another question. As an Edmonton M.L.A., I am curious as to whether the government has any studies under way regarding the new 15.1 percent unemployment rate in this city and the possible effect of that on the further growth of the food bank here in Edmonton.

DR. WEBBER: No, Mr. Speaker, not that I am aware of. We do not have any studies related to the growth of food banks. When we are providing services to people through the department or through these agencies — unless there is a need for studies, I don't think the government should be doing studies because someone sees that there might be a need for them.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, the hungry and unemployed will be glad to hear that.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary on this.

MR. MARTIN: My final supplementary to the minister has to do with last Monday. I understand he stuffed the first hamper at the new expanded headquarters of the Calgary food bank. My question is, did the minister have any discussions outside that opening with the demonstrators, who were concerned about provincial social services and economic policy?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, I indicated that I attended the opening of the food bank in the southeast part of the city of Calgary. Safeway donated a store to the Calgary food bank, through the interfaith agencies. The turnout for that particular opening was good, in terms of representation from government and from the different agencies in the city of Calgary.

The hon. member alluded to the fact that there were some placard-waving demonstrators in the vicinity. Yes, we did have an exchange of views. It was obvious that they were not interested in exchanging views but in making a point. I said that I would be happy to hear from them in other circumstances.

MR. ALEXANDER: Mr. Speaker, I wonder if the minister might add to what he has already said, and inform the House as to exactly what he has been asked to do by this so-called growth industry. It strikes me that one of the dynamic and valued functions of a caring community is to want to take care of the people. . .

MR. SPEAKER: Perhaps the hon. member might come directly to the question.

MR. MARTIN: The 1930s, Keith.

MR. ALEXANDER: I invite the minister to tell the Assembly what in fact he has been asked to do by the food bank operations, in aid of the effort they are already making on behalf of the community.

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, the food banks have not been putting great demands on us at all. In fact, a very co-operative effort exists between our department and the agencies operating food banks in the city. The volunteers that are running these operations feel very strongly that they are part of a team, as we are part of a team, in meeting the needs of those who need assistance. So I feel things are working well in terms of a team effort.

On Wednesday this week I attended an annual meeting of Catholic Social Services here in Edmonton. Once again, they are providing excellent services to the needy in the city and expressed their pleasure with the co-operative effort that is taking place. They do not want government to be doing everything. They see the community involvement, the volunteer involvement, as an extremely essential element of the whole process.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary on this topic.

MR. ALEXANDER: A final supplementary; it's crucial. Has the food bank in fact invited the minister to take over funding or other operations which are presently being done by the volunteer sector, specifically having to do with perhaps wrapping it under the arm of his department?

DR. WEBBER: Mr. Speaker, specifically with respect to the Calgary food bank, on Monday there were no requests from the interfaith agencies for extra assistance from the provincial government. They were pleased to be able to assist and work with us. We have had some discussions with Edmonton's food bank in terms of some minor funding, and we have made some offers with respect to that.

Mount Allan Ski Site

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, my question to the hon. Minister of Tourism and Small Business has to do with the potential lack of snow on Mount Allan. [interjections]

MR. MARTIN: It's hidden by the trees, remember?

DR. BUCK: The rocks are just too tall.

In light of the facts that there could be a problem with lack of snow and that the government is looking at putting in snow-making equipment, is the minister in a position to indicate if the government is actively looking at seeding clouds to bring more precipitation in January or February?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, not to my knowledge. At present there has been sufficient snow, even with the kind of temperatures we've had there this past year. I think the 20-year snowfall averages will give us sufficient normal snowfall, to be complemented by machine-made snow, to provide the best site for the 1988 Winter Olympics and also for use afterwards as

an excellent recreational ski facility for the recreational skiers of this province and other areas.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, just to clarify. Is the minister saying that there have not been any studies or weather modification attempts whatsoever in the Mount Allan area, to see if seeding will enhance snow in that area?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, I'm not aware of any specific studies being done in that particular region. I am aware that the Department of Agriculture has an ongoing program relative to cloud seeding for rain, and I believe they are looking at snowfall as well. There was one being done in the United States as well, and of course that's of interest to us. I've asked for the report on the one in the United States, to see if there may be any value. But no direct study related to additional snowfall in the Mount Allan region is being done by the Department of Tourism and Small Business.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the hon. Minister of Agriculture indicate if his department has done any active studies in the Mount Allan area, through the cloud seeding program?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, the weather modification program is very active not only in areas of hail suppression and increasing rain but specifically in the area of snowpack research. It looks like one of the more exciting areas we may be involved in, in the future. The aircraft involved in that research is doing some work in the mountain areas and, in fact, the normal flight path of that aircraft over the last couple of years has been from Red Deer to Cranbrook to Lethbridge and back. I expect very clearly that it flew across the Mount Allan area.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, can the Minister of Agriculture indicate if there have been any studies done in conjunction with the Saskatchewan government, to see if the attempt at weather modification is causing a change or modification in the weather downstream in Saskatchewan?

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's definitely part of the program, and that's why it's so important that the research for the program continue. It's not only important to assess the impact on other provinces but on other areas within the province, so decisions may be made. Yes, we are looking at that closely and also closely following research done in other areas — for example, the impact that it is shown to have in the United States — so that when we complete our research data in a couple of years, we will have accurate information to base future decisions on.

DR. BUCK: Mr. Speaker, back to the Minister of Tourism and Small Business. Is the minister in a position to indicate if, with the snow equipment in place, we are looking at making inches of snow or feet of snow? What is required to make sure there will be sufficient snow on the mountain to have the downhill?

MR. ADAIR: Mr. Speaker, at this moment I am not in a position to speak of inches, feet, or whatever the measurements may be. But I can indicate that the kind of information that will be available as a result of the master plan, will indicate to us the use of machine-made snow to complement the natural snowfall so that we can have a consistent starting date; in other words, an opening date sometime in that November/December period. I can say again, Mr. Speaker, that there is a good amount of snow in the region. It is to some degree hidden by

the trees, for those who have not had the opportunity to be in the region and try to walk in the deep snow that is there. Having said that, the snowmaking will complement the natural snowfall and will provide an excellent, consistent season for skiers.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary.

DR. BUCK: A final supplementary. The minister is telling us that this will be an ongoing program after the Olympics, that we will keep making snow there for the tourism business after the Olympics are over. Is that what the minister is saying?

MR. ADAIR: No question about that, Mr. Speaker. It is not the intent to put in snowmaking equipment only for the 1988 Olympics and then remove it afterwards. The plan all along has been to utilize that hill as a recreational ski area; the legacy, in essence, that will be left after the 1988 Olympics. It will provide snowmaking equipment that will be used by recreational skiers below the tree line — I should point that out, too — for all the skiers of Alberta and other areas, who may want to use the Mount Allan site.

Grazing Reserves

MR. ALGER: Mr. Speaker, if it's all the same to you, I'd like to stay in the area but change the seasons somewhat.

My problem is for the Associate Minister of Public Lands and Wildlife. My question is: while all this fun and games is going on out there in the mountains and we're using up a lot of territory for roads and campgrounds, is the minister doing anything about improving the grazing districts of the country for my ranchers down there, who are finding themselves desperately short of rangeland?

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, that is a very interesting question. We can assure the hon. member that any participant who previously had range cattle in the Kananaskis area has not lost any animal unit months.

Over the years since 1980, several projects have taken place. I believe in the range of some 20 different range improvement programs have taken place in that area. That includes some fencing, removal of brush, and weed control. It is also our intention this year to increase that, and we will be talking about it in our budget estimates. I think some \$130,000 of range improvement programs will be taking place in the Kananaskis area.

I assure the hon. member that no permittee has lost any grazing since the recreational uses have taken place in the area. It was a commitment of this government to definitely maintain grazing throughout the area, and we will endeavour to do so.

Federal Housing Program

MR. GOGO: Mr. Speaker, I have a question to the Minister of Housing, with regard to the federal announcement that Alberta is to receive some 1,200 units of social housing worth some \$52 million, which obviously is going to provide much-needed work for our tradesmen in the construction industry. My question is: who actually delivers these 1,200 units? Is it Canada Mortgage and Housing or the minister's department?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, I think the nature of the question points up the risk in taking news reports at face value.

The Department of Housing and the Housing Corporation consult regularly with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and enter into agreements, generally annually. The

government, through the heritage fund and our seniors' and community housing programs, provides capital for needed projects. In the course of consultation with Canada Mortgage and Housing, we operate under certain sections of the National Housing Act, where the federal government cost shares a portion of the operating deficit. The total number of units is broken down in different ways, Mr. Speaker. A certain number are provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing, principally to municipal nonprofit housing organizations that are located in Calgary and Edmonton, and some co-operative housing. The determination of the housing units — where they go and which communities require them — is made by the provincial government.

MR. GOGO: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I'm prone to get my information from the same place as the opposition; that's why I'm putting the question.

MR. MARTIN: At least you had some information for once.

MR. GOGO: With regard to the minister's response that his department will determine where those units go, presumably on the basis of need, could the minister give an indication where the greatest need for social housing in the province is at this time?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, that's a very difficult question to respond to, and I think it would be more appropriate to deal with it when the estimates of the Department of Housing are debated in the Legislature.

The final determination of where particular units go is updated regularly. There isn't a determination made on a certain date and not changed. We try to retain flexibility, to respond to needs of particular communities. So I think it's a question of detail, and it's probably more appropriate to deal with it during the estimates.

MR. GOGO: My final supplementary question, Mr. Speaker. The minister made reference to his estimates, which will be before this House. Is what we're talking about in terms of subsidy a budgetary matter, or will the minister be seeking special funds from the House to accommodate those subsidies?

MR. SHABEN: Mr. Speaker, the budget does deal with the operating costs of the Alberta Housing Corporation and the Alberta Home Mortgage Corporation, which provide significant subsidies for low-income families and seniors. Those are a part of the estimates that will be dealt with during discussion of the total departmental requirements.

LRT Funding — Calgary

MR. MUSGREAVE: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to address a question to the Minister of Transportation. I understand he had a meeting yesterday with Mayor Klein and the Calgary transportation authority, and I wonder if he could advise us if the city proposed that some initial engineering work for the northwest LRT leg in Calgary could be undertaken with provincial help.

MR. M. MOORE: Mr. Speaker, I had a discussion with the mayor of Calgary, relative to city council's desire that a long-term commitment on LRT or urban transportation funding be made by June 30 this year. I was inquiring as to the reasons for that time frame, and had a discussion that involved the construction time period for the northwest leg of LRT. If that

were to go ahead — and it's obvious, from my discussions with the mayor, that that construction would have to proceed in the summer of 1985 in order that it be completed by the winter of 1988, when the Winter Olympics will be held in Calgary — it would therefore be necessary that some engineering work be undertaken this summer, in order to accommodate that construction schedule. We then discussed whether or not there was a possibility that the engineering work might be carried out even without a long-term commitment for urban transportation funding by our government by June 30. The indication from the mayor was that there was certainly some opportunity for us to consider that approach.

MR. MUSGREAVE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. Was the mayor able to advise the minister if the court action on the location of the route to northwest Calgary was going to be continued, or were the citizens of Hillhurst-Sunnyside going to drop the action?

MR. M. MOORE: I had no direct advice from the mayor as to whether or not there was any conclusion on that matter, although he did indicate to me that the alderman who represents the ward in question had indicated that, after some community meetings, they felt that the matter of routing through that neighbourhood could be resolved by discussions with the citizens.

Keho Reservoir

MR. THOMPSON: Mr. Speaker, my question is to the Minister of the Environment. Could the minister advise the Assembly as to the current status of the project to expand the off-stream storage in Keho Lake?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, the Keho Lake project was first announced in 1980, as part of an overall package for irrigation rehabilitation and improvement to the headwork structure in southern Alberta. It was originally planned that this project would be an increase in the storage of Keho Lake from some 55,000 cubic metres to some 90,000 cubic metres of storage. It was anticipated that this project would proceed in the last fiscal year, 1983. Unfortunately, due to delays in land acquisition, that project could not proceed last year. We are still endeavouring to acquire the necessary lands to see that project proceed this year.

MR. THOMPSON: A supplemental, Mr. Speaker. Due to the delay in that land acquisition, is the minister considering expropriation?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, it would be our preference to negotiate a reasonable and equitable settlement with the land-owners. However, given the concerns expressed in the area, the necessity to expedite this project, and because of the water supply conditions in the Oldman River basin, we are prepared to seriously consider expropriation to expedite this project.

MR. STROMBERG: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. I just returned from Lethbridge and a tour of Keho Lake. I'd like to ask the minister: with the prediction of a forthcoming shortage of water in southern Alberta, why isn't water being put into the reservoir now?

MR. BRADLEY: Mr. Speaker, my understanding is that it is scheduled to start filling the Keho reservoir on April 15, which is this Sunday.

Water Supply — Southern Alberta

MR. HYLAND: A supplementary to the Minister of Agriculture, Mr. Speaker. The Minister of the Environment related to the possible shortage of water in southern Alberta. I wonder if the Minister of Agriculture is planning a program related to pumping, et cetera, for cattle and domestic use in the event of a dry summer.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, it's a bit too early to judge yet whether or not the condition this year will be serious, because April is usually one of the higher moisture months. But within the departments of Agriculture and the Environment, we certainly recognize the concerns of water shortage, particularly in southern Alberta.

In direct response to the question about pumping, I believe we have 35 miles of pipe and 24 pumps, which will be moved around the province to supply domestic and livestock water supplies as needed in the farming community. So there is action being taken. We are continually monitoring, on a daily basis, and working in co-operation with other departments in the government that might be impacted, to make sure we have a co-ordinated approach to whatever action we may take.

MR. HYLAND: Mr. Speaker, while this co-ordination is going on, will the minister be in a position to do something when needed, instead of talking about it? It seems like — at least in the last few years, when we talked about it, it rained. So maybe we should keep on talking about it and be ready to do something at the appropriate time.

MR. FJORDBOTTEN: Mr. Speaker, that's probably very true; when you anticipate taking some action, the circumstances change. But to make sure that we are fully prepared, I've established a drought monitoring committee within the Department of Agriculture, which is working in co-operation with the Department of the Environment to make sure that we can establish and co-ordinate well-established programs that are in place to assist in areas that may need it.

Human Rights

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, my question for the Minister of Education is with respect to the report, Equality Now, by the special committee on visible minorities in Canadian society. The report includes a number of conclusions on the status of visible minorities, particularly in the areas of employment, education, and human rights. My question is has the minister had an opportunity to review this report, and could the minister advise the House on the implications of the findings or possible future directions the minister might give the Alberta Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, which is just now concluding its report?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I have had an opportunity to review the report referred to by the hon. gentleman. It is true that it is in the nature of that report that it might have implications for the work of the consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding. It's not my intention to do anything more than draw the report, Equality Now, to the attention of that committee. I believe they have a good grasp of their terms of reference, which are currently broad enough to encompass the concerns raised in the report. I have confidence that the consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding could take the report into appropriate consideration.

MR. LEE: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker. The report indicates that in many areas there are serious problems in the area of social integration of minorities and that individuals from visible minorities are not given opportunities to participate fully in Canadian society. Could the Minister of Education, or possibly the Minister of Manpower, indicate if consideration is being given to reviewing or expanding the second-language program in this province for immigrant groups?

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I think it's fair to say that because the English as a second language program is meant to be responsive to demand, it is always under review. We are always considering whether or not there needs to be extension, enhancement, or improvement of the program. The only thing I can suggest is that if the hon. member, or indeed any other member of the Assembly, has a concern he would like to bring to our attention, we would certainly be pleased to receive it.

MR. LEE: Mr. Speaker, a further supplementary for the Minister of Labour, responsible for the Human Rights Commission. Has the minister given any consideration to the special needs of immigrants and visible minority women, as outlined in the report? The report suggests that women are often exploited in the workplace because of low language ability, fewer skills, and discrimination. Specifically, has the minister been aware of these concerns, and has he given consideration to reviewing the recommendations herein?

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, the Alberta Human Rights Commission periodically has a meeting with me. At that point we discuss the priority matters which commissioners have identified. The item that has been raised was in fact the subject of a discussion. I think the situation is one which the commission feels reasonably competent to deal with on a complaints basis.

As the hon. member and other hon. members would know Mr. Speaker, there was a special effort in the campaign, Alberta is for All of Us, to try to change understanding. From the degree of acknowledgment by the public, I really believe that many people noted that program and were impressed by it and the message it contained.

On one final point, I have difficulty in accepting the hon. member's use of the expression "exploited". While there is an acknowledged difference in opportunity for people who have language difficulties or difficulty understanding customs, I think that is a different matter from exploitation, which has a much harsher ring to it.

MR. PAPROSKI: A supplementary, Mr. Speaker.

MR. SPEAKER: Might this be the final supplementary on this topic.

MR. PAPROSKI: Thank you Mr. Speaker. To the Minister of Labour or the Minister of Manpower, this report, Equality Now, indicates throughout the difficulties members of visible minorities face through their lack of understanding of Canadian society and government. This frequently results, perhaps, in work exploitation. I wonder if the minister could comment on this particular area, please.

MR. YOUNG: Mr. Speaker, again I want to distinguish between the meaning of exploitation which in my view has an intent implied to it. What often happens — and it happens not only to new Canadians, immigrants or visible minorities but also to, if I can put it, Canadians of several generations — is that by virtue of their particular background the community

in which they live, the occupation of their parents, or whatever, a whole variety of social factors, people do not understand the opportunities available to them in certain instances. We as MLAs are regularly approached by persons who do not understand all the opportunities, and one of our functions is to assist them.

I want to say again that I believe there is always opportunity for improvement. The other side of it is that I believe the structure we have in place should deal with those matters which are discriminatory, based upon the criteria in the Individual's Rights Protection Act.

MR. PAPROSKI: Mr. Speaker . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With respect, we're running out of time. The hon. Member for Edmonton Kingsway might wish to come back to this topic next week.

If the Assembly agrees, I've mentioned the hon. Member for Calgary Egmont. With the consent of the Assembly, we might deal with his concern briefly.

HON MEMBERS: Agreed.

Chinese Trade Show

DR. CARTER: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Two quick questions to the Premier, with respect to the Great Trade Show of China that is taking place. It gives emphasis to our sister province of Heilongjiang. The brochure distributed this morning talks about the Asia/Alberta exchange. Is consideration being given to inviting the provinces of Hokkaido, Japan, and Gangweon, South Korea, to arrange similar trade shows in the province?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I think what we're attempting to do is assess the effectiveness of what we're involved in and embarking on, starting tomorrow. Having evaluated the effectiveness, we'll determine the follow-up.

I might mention, because I think it's appropriate, that this trade fair is really co-ordinated and a matter of a high degree of co-operation between Edmonton Northlands and the government of Alberta. So it's a matter of determining the effectiveness of this approach from an Edmonton, Alberta Canada base, in terms of all of North America, as to whether or not we'd follow up with the other sister provinces in Korea and Japan.

DR. CARTER: Mr. Speaker, my supplemental. I know there's been good promotion of the Great Trade Show of China in the Edmonton region. I hope similar promotion has taken place throughout the province, to get other producers and purchasers to come here and see the importance of the relationship between Alberta and the Pacific Rim. But is it simply a trade show for promotion purposes, or may the goods and services be obtained?

MR. LOUGHEED: Mr. Speaker, I'd ask the Minister of International Trade to respond to that question.

Perhaps I should underline one critical point. In our trade with China, we are in a very significant surplus position. A wheat farmer in this province has to share, I hope, my concern that we can continue to hold that market. To continue to hold that important market and expand it in agriculture and in other ways would depend upon two-way trade. Therefore, the success of this show will depend upon an expansion of Chinese products being sold throughout North America.

Perhaps the Minister of International Trade could expand on how we're trying to accomplish that, in co-operation with Edmonton Northlands.

MR. SCHMID: As a reply to that, Mr. Speaker, if I may quote a figure first of all, Canada exports \$1.2 billion worth of products to China per year and only buys \$200 million worth. It's especially significant because, from Alberta alone, we export to China in excess of \$300 million worth of wheat, barley, and cowhides. So in order to keep that bilateral trade — to be sure, other countries are in fact going to China and trying to promote their wheat and products — we at least buy from China. I think the highlight of these trade visits we have to make, because others make them continuously, is of course the visit the Premier made to China last year. Let me just mention again in that connection that because of the visit, we of course have received not only the highlight for our sale of wheat and agricultural products . . .

MR. SPEAKER: With great respect, we're past the time limit for the question period, and I must say the answers have been very wide ranging, having regard to the nature of the question.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

MR. SPEAKER: May we revert briefly to Introduction of Special Guests?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

head: INTRODUCTION OF SPECIAL GUESTS (reversion)

MR. SPARROW: Mr. Speaker, it is my pleasure today to introduce to you and the Legislative Assembly a group of spouses of employees of Simmons Drilling company. In the interest of equity, I hope some of their husbands or mates were able to catch up with them. They are located in the members gallery, and I wish them to rise and receive the warm welcome of the House.

MR. SCHMID: Mr. Speaker, I have to add just one comment. You can buy all the goods at the trade show.

MR. SPEAKER: Order please.

MR. MARTIN: Mr. Speaker, I too would like to draw attention to people that have come into the gallery, and I hope we would give them a warm welcome. They're here for the debate on the estimates. We have the president of the Alberta Teachers' Association, Art Cowley; two vice-presidents, Brendan Dunphy and Thora Meissner; executive secretary Bernie Keeler; and 15 district representatives from throughout the province. I ask them to stand and be recognized by the Assembly.

head: COMMITTEE OF SUPPLY

[Mr. Appleby in the Chair]

MR. CHAIRMAN: Will the Committee of Supply please come to order. Could we have order please.

Department of Education

MR. CHAIRMAN: I understand the minister wishes to make some brief opening remarks.

MR. KING: The challenge that faces any minister when he is establishing the budget for his department is to take certain decisions that are made by the government as a whole and to craft them in a way that provides for the most efficient, effective, and economic activity of the department for which he is responsible. The concerns of the government, as reflected in this budget, can be reduced to four principal concerns. The first is to contain the deficit of the provincial government and, over time, to move from a deficit position to the position of a balanced or a surplus budget. The second priority is that in a time of transition, both for the community and for the government, the challenge of transition should be shared by everybody in the community and by all levels of government. The third concern of the government has been to reduce the size of its own work force. The fourth has been to maintain a high level of people services.

Broadly stated, those are priorities of the government reflected in this budget. The estimates of the Department of Education represent for us the results as we have attempted to take those priorities and apply them in the area of our responsibility. I am proud of the results. The government's budgeted expenditure is estimated to be down by 1.9 percent this year as compared to last year. At the same time, the estimates for Alberta Education are up 3.7 percent.

As the budget is an indication to the community as a whole, the estimates of the department are a signal to the educational community, and the signals for education in 1984-85 are these. First, we must temper unrealistic expectations. We must be reminded that education is a part of the community; it is not apart from the community.

Secondly, the estimates begin to reorder our priorities by shifting from a preoccupation with process to a more vital concern for objectives that are important to students. The estimates reflect that we have reduced the number of positions in the department by 3 percent, compared to the government's overall reduction of 2.5 percent in staff positions. The estimates also reflect that we are quite markedly shifting the emphasis within the Department of Education to strategic planning. The estimates also reflect that we are trying to move from negative kinds of controls to more positive kinds of controls.

Thirdly, the estimates signal that we are attempting to position ourselves so that in the medium term, we can pursue stable and sustainable improvements in education — not more but better. The estimates reflect improved funding to meet the special needs of students. The estimates reflect assistance for teacher professional development and assistance to assure greater equity among school boards in the province.

The government has major initiatives under way that touch almost every significant aspect of education. We are reminded of evaluation programs: the provincial diploma exams which, after an absence of 12 years, were written again in January 1984. Members will be aware that this morning I released Department of Education policies on student, teacher, program, school, and system evaluation, and I would like to file those policy statements for the information of all members. The policies support the idea of ongoing evaluation directed toward development and improvement within the system.

Aside from our initiatives with evaluation, there is the implementation of a new management and finance plan. I would also like to table for members a synoptic description of that plan. But in a nutshell it enhances local responsibility, discretion,

and flexibility, and focusses on objectives, not processes. Because this is a theme I will return to during the course of my remarks, I should say I do not mean to suggest that process is unimportant — not for a moment. But it is necessary to remember that the process is not an end in itself. The process is pursued for the objective we find at the end of it, and we have to keep that in mind. Whenever and however we work with process, let's not lose sight of the objectives we have in mind.

We have under way reviews of the secondary program of studies and of the School Act. This morning I announced the names of the members of the two committees that will advise me in these respective reviews. Let me make one comment about the review of the secondary program of studies. The department has distributed almost 1 million tabloids to every home in the province. In as many years as I have been interested in government in this province, I am not aware of any similar effort to invite, in an almost personal way, public participation in the process of reviewing an important aspect of education. That brochure should have been delivered by Canada Post to every home in this province. Every citizen has the means and the opportunity to tell the government what they think about secondary education: what we're doing right, what we should continue to do, what we're doing wrong, and what we should improve. I really hope that either individually or in groups, in service clubs or church groups, between now and the end of May we will get a significant response to that brochure. If we don't, that itself will reflect on the interest of Albertans in education, which I hold to be critically important for us all.

The review of the School Act will also be important. On Monday the department will release a so-called issues paper, a description of the way the school system is operated currently and a comment on the important issues that are raised by the operation of the system at the present time. As with the review of the secondary program of studies, we welcome the extensive participation of interested citizens in the review of the School Act.

The question has been asked, Mr. Chairman: why weren't the advisory committees structured as have been similar committees in the past? Why didn't we invite the Alberta Teachers' Association or the Alberta School Trustees' Association to nominate members to those advisory committees? The answer has been growing in the practice of the department and in my own practice for some time. I believe that matters of policy should be overseen by the community as a whole, not by particular stakeholder or interest groups. That does not for a moment downplay the significant and legitimate interest of those groups.

To have taken the decision that interest groups would not be represented on the advisory committee is not for a moment to suggest that they will be unable to have significant input to the process. Every teacher and every trustee is as welcome as any other citizen of the province to participate in the process individually. In addition to that, every organization, including the Alberta School Trustees' Association and the Alberta Teachers' Association, is invited to participate in a dialogue with the advisory committee about the end of both reviews. But insofar as policy is concerned, policy will be advised and confirmed by a political process which treats every citizen equally, a process which does not elevate any one citizen or any one interest group above any other citizen or group in the province.

Mr. Chairman, it is also our intention in the two weeks following Easter to release department action plans in response to recent task force reports. In the two weeks following Easter, we will release an action plan responding to the task force

report on guidance and counselling, the task force report on the education of the gifted and talented, the task force report on the use of computers in the schools, the task force report on educational finance, and the discussion paper on school libraries. These action plans, as their names suggest, will outline the department's intentions for action with respect to the implementation of recommendations and the development of new initiatives in each of these five areas over the next 12 to 18 months.

At the end of April, we will be releasing a discussion paper that describes a quite new model for teacher education, preparation, and teacher certification in the province. Recognizing that the teacher is the most important person involved in the education of our children, everyone will be interested in that discussion paper.

In late May or early June, I expect to receive the preliminary report of the consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding. I expect to receive their final report in December.

We are also working on an experiment that will involve what we describe as the upward extension of the principles of early childhood services into the ages where children now attend grades 1 and 2, possibly including grade 3.

In addition there are priorities indicated in some detail in the estimates. In Vote 1, there is money for the work of the consultative Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, about \$215,000. There is also an amount of about \$2.7 million related to the development, administration, and marking of the provincial diploma examinations. It is worthy of note that much of that \$2.7 million is to pay classroom teachers to mark the exams, something we consider to be an excellent in-service opportunity for classroom teachers as well as for our own staff in Alberta Education. The interaction between the department and the classroom teachers has proven to be extremely beneficial. We expect the value of that interaction to continue.

In Vote 2 we have an increase in funds to extend the eligibility for extension programs from age 19 to 20. We've got an increase in building and equipment support, including \$5.3 million for computers and business equipment. We have approximately \$1.5 million of additional money for new programs for the gifted and talented. We have approximately \$1 million for the Grande Prairie assessment centre for multi-sensory handicapped; the hon. member will no doubt be delighted. We have \$4 million for teacher in-service, \$1.3 million for growth of language programs, \$4 million for special education, \$2.7 million for equity programs, and \$1.1 million for vocational education.

If we succeed in the initiatives I have just described, Mr. Chairman, we will remake education in Alberta in ways that will make themselves felt in the province for 30 or 40 years. Do we have the resources? Do we have the will? Do we have the stamina? Have we set out to accomplish more than we are capable of? The question is this: is Alberta's educational system up to the challenge? My answer is an unqualified yes.

Education is more generously funded in Alberta than in any other Canadian province. In 1982, the last year for which complete figures were available, our per capita investment in education was \$657, the highest in Canada. In the same year, on a per pupil basis, our investment was the second highest of all Canadian provinces. We invested \$3,548 per pupil in Alberta in 1982. The only province that invested more in that year was Quebec. It is important to remember that for reasons unique to that province, they were paying over time for downsizing a system that is greatly reduced in size. Albertans are generous supporters of education. The government is, and the people are, in each and every one of our communities.

Relatively speaking, the property tax required to achieve this high level of investment is lower in Alberta than anywhere else in Canada. It is true that some provinces have no significant local taxation in support of education. It is also true that in those provinces, they have no local control over education.

We also have skilled, experienced, and dedicated teachers. In 1971 the typical teacher had 2.7 years of university education. In 1983 the typical teacher had 4.1 to 4.2 years of postsecondary education. Their dedication and experience is matched by their formal preparation. We have first-class curriculum and materials. We have plentiful facilities of good quality. We have effective administration and trusteeship. All in all, the learning environment in this province is second to no other province in Canada.

As a working environment, it's a pretty good one too. The typical teacher in Alberta is the best paid teacher in all of Canada. That teacher's salary is 5.5 percent higher than in the next best province, which is our neighbour Saskatchewan. The budget made a related point that is worth recalling. That typical teacher, who is in any case better paid here than elsewhere in Canada, also takes home another \$1,500 more here than in Saskatchewan or in any other province because of our low level of taxation. That extra \$1,500 the teacher takes home, which no other teacher in Canada takes home, represents another 5 percent on take-home pay.

Provincewide, pupil/teacher ratios have improved every year since 1975. In 1971 the pupil/teacher ratio in this province was 19.2. In 1982 it was 17, a 12 percent improvement in the pupil/teacher ratio in 12 years.

Alberta is the only province in Canada that experienced an increase in enrollment between 1973 and 1983. We're the only province in Canada that has experienced an increase in enrollment in the last decade. In that time our enrollment is up 3.4 percent. In terms of shift in population, the next most fortunate province is British Columbia. Their enrollment in the same period has declined 7.5 percent. Our enrollment is up in absolute numbers. But at the same time, as a proportion of the population, enrollment has declined from 26.1 percent in 1971 to 17.9 percent in 1983. In 1971 approximately one citizen out of four was a minicitizen in school. In 1983, 17.9 percent of our citizens were minicitizens in school.

People have argued that there is declining support for education in this province. The fact of the matter is that while support has declined, measured as a proportion of the total provincial government budget, the rate of decline has been less swift than the rate of decline of the student enrollment as a proportion of the total. In other words, in the last decade, when you relate our effort to the population we are serving, the level of effort has actually increased in this province. Total grants for education have increased from \$210 million in 1971 to \$976 million in 1983, a nominal increase of more than 300 percent. After accounting for inflation, the real increase in funding for education in this province has been approximately 200 percent since 1971.

There are some other arguments made, three fairly commonly, and I'd like to address them each very quickly. The first is that a reduced proportion of provincial funding leads inexorably to larger classes. The simple fact of the matter is that our experience since 1975 refutes that. Since 1975 the pupil/teacher ratio has been improving, while at the same time local authorities have chosen to increase their own proportion of the total education budget. From our experience of the last eight years, there is no relationship that we can observe between the pupil/teacher ratio and the provincial proportion of total educational effort in this province.

The second argument is that a greater proportion of funding from the province would improve education. In that case we should be prepared to acknowledge that the educational system in this province was notably better in 1974 than it is today, because in 1974 the proportion of the budget that was paid for by provincial revenue was higher than at the present time. I don't believe there is anyone who would argue that education was better in 1974 than what our teachers are providing in our classrooms today. We have the resources to do the job. I believe we also have the will and the stamina.

I have travelled in this province from Milk River to Garden Creek and from Lloydminster to Banff. I have visited more than 140 schools, usually during school hours, usually including an opportunity to have lunch or coffee with the staff. I have visited more than 75 school boards on their home turf. I have spoken to ATA conventions, trustee workshops, service clubs, church groups, and home and school association seminars. I have done talk shows, and I have visited editorial boards. Like every MLA, I read my mail, answer my phone calls, and chat with people while I am standing in the lineup at the bank.

AN HON. MEMBER: Would that be to deposit or to take out?

MR. KING: I'm there more often than I would like to be.

I feel confident in saying that the vast majority of people involved in education — parents, teachers, administrators, trustees, academics, civil servants, MLAs, and the general public — value education highly, want to be part of making it better, and are prepared to make a commitment to the improvement of education. By means of the initiatives I earlier described and other initiatives also under way, with the resources, the will, and the stamina at hand, we have the means to accomplish great ends. Again, a question: what ends do we have in mind? What do we want for our children?

I would like to persuade all my colleagues and the general public that we should be talking in terms of children, not teachers; in terms of learning, not teaching; in terms of responsibilities, not rights; and in terms of excellence, not minimal competence. We have to be concerned with the objectives we will achieve at the end of this mighty process we find ourselves involved with.

There is talk in this province and in others about "back to the basics". I would like everyone to please expunge the term from their vocabularies.

MR. MARTIN: Build on the basics.

MR. KING: Build on the basics — what a good suggestion.

AN HON. MEMBER: The first one.

MR. KING: One of the things at least a few of you have heard me talk about is the fact that the decisions we make in the next 18 months will only really be felt for the first time in the school, in the classroom, about four years from now. In other words, a child two years old today will be the first to feel the effect of the decisions we make. That child then will live with the decisions for the next 12 years and will graduate from high school in the year 2000. About 15 years after that, that child will be sitting in this Legislative Assembly or as a member of the provincial Executive Council or as a school trustee or wherever. The decisions we make in the next two years will begin to be felt in 2015 in terms of decisions made and implemented in the community. That is either an exhilarating or a frightening prospect, depending on how you think of it. It should make us

clear in our conviction that reading, writing, and arithmetic are not good enough for those children.

Surely we want our children to understand advanced mathematics, to appreciate great literature, and to understand the economies and political systems of other countries. Surely we want them to appreciate how they can make a contribution to their community. We want a sophisticated, superb education for our children. We recognize that that kind of education is built on a firm foundation. We are concerned with the basics, not as an end in themselves but as a foundation upon which that kind of education can be built. I believe that is what we want for our children.

For that purpose I think we want our children to know themselves and their roots. We want them to be justifiably self-confident of their knowledge, their skills, and their attitudes. We want them to have the conviction that their life will make a difference in the lives of others. I think we want them to be givers to their community, not simply takers from it. I would like to pass on to our children the conviction that their responsibility is to help to create the world. In our educational system, I would like to prepare our children as well as we can so they will live by that conviction.

I want a system that treats each child as a person deserving individual attention, respect, and responsibility. I want a tolerance in our schools and in our community that is based on understanding and respecting differences, not on homogenizing our children. I want a school system that is by example always positive and always affirming the best in each child. I want a system that is open, accessible, and welcoming not only of students but of their parents. I want a system that is responsive: I want a system that is responsible. In all those things I want. I do not believe I am unique. I think my ambitions for education are shared by the great majority of Albertans. I believe these estimates and the programs they support move us in that direction, orient us towards those objectives, and allow us progress.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

MR. KOWALSKI: Mr. Chairman, I had a request from the Acting Leader of the Opposition to forsake my place in the speaking order this afternoon so that he might go first, but — oh, he's returned. If the hon. member would like to proceed, he can certainly do so.

MR. MARTIN: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I humbly thank the hon. Member for Barrhead. I now owe him one, and I do appreciate it.

I would like to enter into the estimates to say I heard much of what the minister had to say in his brief remarks. I will try to be as brief, but I think I can succeed a little more. I must say to the hon. Minister of Education that I'm not always sure what he's saying, but it always sounds good. I have to admit that.

Of course we know education is a very broad area, but in my remarks I would basically like to go into two areas. When I was listening at the end, I couldn't disagree with the types of schools the Minister of Education was alluding to. I don't think many of us could. But I would remind the Minister of Education that to get those schools he wants, there's a certain thing that comes; it costs money. I think the minister is well aware of that.

I would like to look into two areas. I know one affects both the minister's area and mine, and I hope we're both very concerned about it. It has to do with school closures. I would then also like to take a look at educational finance generally. I haven't had much time to look at his provincial evaluation

policies, so I'll save that and some of the other reports that are coming out for another round.

Mr. Chairman, the reason many of us have raised the problem of school closures — I recognize that it's been an even more severe problem in Calgary than it is in Edmonton. I suggest to the hon. minister that it's going to be an ongoing problem. Certainly we've heard a lot about it this year in both major cities. When I look at the figures I have, I think we're going to be facing some problems unless something dramatic is done with the leadership of the Department of Education.

What I'd like to do first of all is lay out the problem as I see it. I believe the problem occurred in the 1940s and 1950s and on into the 1960s. Overcrowding and shortage of school facilities were major problems confronting most school jurisdictions in Canada and literally right across North America. However, Mr. Chairman, a dramatic change has recently occurred. We're well aware of it, particularly in Alberta. The combined factors of falling birthrates, the aging of the population, the movement of families from older neighbourhoods to newer suburbs, and of course the substantial out-migration of population from Alberta to other provinces, which we've heard about recently in this Assembly, have had a sudden and serious effect on Alberta's enrollment patterns.

The flurry of school building that was typical across the continent in the 1960s unfortunately continued unabated in Alberta right up to last year. The provincial mechanisms in place for approving and funding new schools seemed to have limited effect on curbing the rate of building. There is no evidence of careful, long-range planning on the part of the districts or the province. Each project was reviewed on a one-to-one basis, with little careful analysis of the impact on the bigger picture. I point out — and I tried to raise this in question period a week or so ago — that the result was that by 1979, when a new capital funding plan was introduced, there were spaces in Alberta schools for 600,000 pupils and at that time only 420,000 enrollments. Since 1979, enrollments have increased only slightly, but 75,000 additional pupil spaces have been built. I suggest that the problem is now very serious.

When we look at some figures I have — and perhaps the minister might want to comment on them — I believe it's going to be one of the most serious problems facing us in the province in the next five years. Based on the above figures and a provincially mandated average classroom size of 25 students, with one-third of the places in the province underutilized, we're confronted with a theoretical surplus of 10,200 classrooms. Since it costs provincial and municipal taxpayers about \$75,000 per year to operate an average full-sized classroom, this means that hypothetically Albertans are paying about \$765 million a year to maintain a large amount of underutilized space. I won't go into it further, but in terms of Edmonton and Calgary, where the problems are severe, approximately half the schools are already running at half capacity or less. If the recession continues, as it seems to be with this government's economic policies, the situation only worsens. What we're saying clearly to the minister, Mr. Chairman, is that if nothing is done, the inevitable results will be split grades and a general deterioration in the scope and quality of education services offered to Alberta children.

To be fair to the province — I have criticized them; I think they have been one of the main players while we have this serious problem. What has the province been doing? Basically nothing, although, as this government likes to do, there are a number of studies. I would suggest to the minister that the studies done by his department are generally good. Now we're waiting for the action.

I look at a two-year, \$62,000 study they funded in conjunction with the Edmonton separate school board, which

reviewed the experience of other jurisdictions in North America. They identified potential users of excess school space, suggested ways of managing this surplus space, and made numerous recommendations to the province for further action. I quoted from another study the other day in the House: in 1981, Alberta Housing and Public Works funded a technical study entitled *Adaptive Reuse of Excess School Space*, which looked at the technical feasibility of converting an Edmonton elementary school into various housing options. There are other studies; I could go on and on.

The point is that the government has some useful studies looking at this particular province. But as usual, we have studies with no action. I was slightly dismayed when the minister said the other day in question period that it's basically up to the local school boards, because they are partners in it. But they cannot do much in this matter without the leadership of the Department of Education. What we are now facing from the Department of Education is going to make this problem worse. No matter how the minister tries to wash with it, limiting budget increases from the province to zero percent for 1984 is going to result in more pressure.

When you also look at the fact that the province — and this is something the province did that directly affects underutilized space — has penalized boards for any excess, underutilized space they may have by reducing the amount of capital and renovation grants available in relation to the utilization factors, obviously that's going to have a severe impact on school closures, as the minister is well aware. I don't know if it's true or not; the Edmonton board said they would lose \$100,000 if they didn't close this school. When boards are between a rock and a hard place, when they're being underfunded, they're going to have to look at that.

[Mr. Purdy in the Chair]

Without being negative, the point I'm trying to make is: try to provide some alternatives. It's not an easy problem at this stage; I recognize that. But there are many, many ideas, and many of them have been brought forward in terms of studies that I have alluded to, to the minister. We spent just a brief time researching this, because it became a very serious area. I know one of the schools in the minister's riding is closing, as is H.A. Gray in my riding. I have some very upset parents; I'm sure he's heard from many upset parents. What are the alternatives? Recognizing that we have this underutilization, that's what we want to look at.

We found a number of examples. Some of them may be appropriate, some not. When we looked across this country and even in the United States where they have faced this problem, we found the range of supplemental uses for school buildings across the continent is very broad. I'm sure the minister is well aware that it ranges from creative ideas for restaurants, print shops, and housing, to alternative education, churches, museums, community centres, and so on. One example I point out, Mr. Chairman, is in Hamilton, Ontario. There is the Hamilton central elementary school, where the top floor has been converted into office space while the bottom storey remains a school. Another example is in Victoria. B.C. Town & Country Realty Ltd. bought the four-room Beacon Hill elementary school from the Victoria school board for \$86,000 and spent \$350,000 converting it into eight condominium units. The three-storey school was designated an historical site, meaning that the owners could not touch the exterior; nevertheless, the conversion was a success.

There are other examples. I won't go through them all: I think the minister understands my point. In Canada perhaps

the greatest number of experiments occurring have been in Quebec. In Ontario, action is now starting to take place under the province's convert-to-rent program, administered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Seattle has some interesting experiments; I could go into them. But my point is that there are new ideas out there to deal with this serious problem in education that is going to drain all of us.

The point I would like to come to, though, is more of a sociological one. I'm sure the minister is concerned about his area, which is an inner-city part of Edmonton, as I am about my inner-city part of Edmonton, and as the Member for Calgary Buffalo is about inner-city Calgary. When we begin to close schools down, we have a tremendous impact on what happens in that community. Mr. Chairman, we should have recognized one of the things that has happened in all major cities across the United States. A good example would be Detroit. When they allowed their inner city to crumble, they paid for it both economically and in social problems, to the point where they're now moving back toward the inner city.

One of the quickest things you can do to bring down and deteriorate life in the inner city is close the school. It then becomes a chicken and egg thing. When that school goes, the younger people in the area begin to say: what's the point; we're going to move out of the area. They're going to move to St. Albert or Bon Accord or wherever. The new people looking for their first house are not going to move there, so we have that deterioration in the inner city that I'm sure we're all concerned about.

I look at H.A. Gray. I'm not blaming the minister specifically for which schools were closed down in Edmonton. That was a board decision, a shortsighted one as far as I'm concerned. The point is that when they close that school down, I can see that area declining and so can the parents. I've talked to them, and they're worried and concerned. I can't even understand the safety thing — and I'm not blaming the minister for this — when they say elementary kids are going to cross six lanes of traffic to go over to Delton school. That makes absolutely no sense from the safety aspect. Again, I blame the board for that. But those are the types of things that are happening.

Rather than just lay out the problem to the minister, I ask him to consider five things as some ideas to perhaps deal with this problem. It's a very serious, difficult problem at this point, but I ask the minister maybe to comment or take it back in the spirit that it's given. I have listed five things I think could be done immediately by the Department of Education.

Number one, the current capital funding formula governing provincial grants to local boards must be altered so local boards are not penalized for maintaining underutilized space, until they have a chance to develop detailed property management plans.

Number two, I believe the Department of Education must move quickly to establish an information clearinghouse program at the service of local boards, to aid them in understanding and profiting from the experience of other jurisdictions. I've given some of the examples to the minister. Information on such areas as leasing policies, marketing techniques, administrative procedures, case studies, et cetera, should be freely available and accompanied by expert advice from within the department. As well, a research fund to help boards pay for technical consulting assistance necessary to determine the most appropriate alternate uses and the best methods of their implementation, should be developed and established. That's a suggestion.

Mr. Chairman, a third suggestion to the minister: as recommended by the 1982 Communitas study, the 1979-83 building quality restoration program should be extended to include the use of modifications necessary to accommodate nonprofit

community-based users who are unable to raise the capital necessary to cover the cost of such modifications. This is necessary to allow these groups to take advantage of excess school space. Most such groups are unable to come up with the funding necessary for building modifications on their own, yet they are precisely the sorts of users most suitable to programs designed to keep existing schools at least partially open.

My fourth suggestion to the minister: a review of the potential costs and problems associated with reconversion to school use should be undertaken prior to 1985 to determine whether or not there is a need for the development of a special program to assist with the reconversion of school facilities at a later date. Mr. Chairman, I use this as an example to the minister because in some of the jurisdictions in North America, they've come back to these schools, tried to reconvert them at a later date, and found it a very expensive procedure.

The fifth and final suggestion to the minister, dealing with school closures: under the direction and funding of the Minister of Education, a special task force of school board officials, municipal planners, relevant provincial departmental personnel, members of the Alberta Teachers' Association, and trustees should be established to develop a provincewide action plan to deal generally with the very serious problem of vacant school space and to look at the problem for the future.

If he takes those five suggestions and looks at them, I suggest to the hon. minister that this is not a very expensive program. If he has some comments when we come back, fine. I hope he will take that in the spirit it was given.

The other area I want to comment on — and I know the minister would be extremely disappointed if I didn't — has to do with our ongoing dialogue about educational finance in the province of Alberta. Mr. Chairman, let me reiterate some very basic things, if I may. First of all, when I look at the city of Edmonton — I don't have the CPI for every area of Alberta — I find that the latest CPI figure, with inflation rate, is some 4.5 percent.

When the minister says to the local boards, you're going to get a zero percent increase, it's the status quo. The minister is well aware that that is going to affect the quality of education. It can't help but do that. The minister may argue that in the '60s and '70s, when they were putting in massive amounts of money, there was fat. Maybe there was; it depends on the definition of "fat". I suggest to the minister that we're getting into the lean of education. And we're not going to get to that ideal sort of school system the minister alluded to, because it costs dollars to get there.

If we have a zero percent increase and the inflation rate is 4.5 percent — the minister can correct me, but I believe that means one of three things. Number one, if the board wants to maintain the same level of services, they can go to higher property taxes. Number two, they can cut back in terms of some services. Remember that the bulk of the boards' budgets is really people oriented. From our figures, 50 to 80 percent of all boards' costs are in that range. The third alternative — and I know the minister doesn't like the term, but I like to use it — is user fees: charging students and parents extra for courses they take in the school.

Let me look quickly at all three areas, if I may. Let's take a look at the possibility of boards going back and saying: to maintain that level, another 4.5 percent increase, we'll move into property taxes. Mr. Chairman, you and I know what will happen in the middle of a recession if we go back to the local taxpayers — some of them are unemployed; some of them are struggling; we have small businesses in bankruptcy — and say we're going to add to the property tax. No local politicians are going to do it if they want to be around after the next election.

I think the minister and I would probably agree on that point. I would point out to the minister that I believe it is frankly a regressive tax; that it's not appropriate to come off the property tax. He's well aware that that has been a growing burden on local taxpayers.

The latest figures I have: some 32 percent of local budgets come from the property tax payer, the rest from the Department of Education. I remind the minister that in the early '70s it was only 20 percent. So gradually more and more and more of the cost of education has been placed in the hands of the local property tax payers. I don't believe that's an appropriate measure.

We can look at cuts in services. Perhaps the minister believes there's fat there. I would be willing to look at some examples of where we can cut. But when we're basically dealing with salaries, the only thing I can see is that there has to be a cutback in terms of the number of teachers and perhaps the number of janitors or backup people. That's precisely what happened in Edmonton. I know they didn't cut people; it's attrition. But the effect is the same. That is going to add to class size. There are going to be more kids in that classroom. I know of schools, and the minister does now — I know more about the high school system, where I've seen up to 40 kids in a classroom. I suggest to the minister that that's not quality education. That's not the type of education the minister alluded to earlier.

I know the minister is going to suggest a freeze or cutbacks in wages. That may be realistic, but remember that each time we have a cutback in purchasing power by any group, that has an effect on the economy. They're not going to spend as much as either.

AN HON. MEMBER: Including MLAs.

MR. MARTIN: Yes, including MLAs. It would suggest some of us could be cut a lot. But I make the point that I obviously don't believe that's appropriate either. [interjection] The principal here says he agrees with it.

The third alternative is user fees. Mr. Minister, you may quibble with the term, but you know what I am talking about. As you're well aware, the ATA survey in January 1984 estimated that there is some \$20 million paid out by parents for school-based goods. I know that user fees have been there for many years, but I suggest to you that it will become an ongoing problem as boards become squeezed. They're not going to go to the property tax payer. They don't want to cut back on teachers. I believe this is the route many of them are going to go, and we see examples of that. At the high school level, we now see an average of \$67.82 to \$91.72 per student.

I philosophically reject the whole concept of user fees. I simply believe it hurts lower income parents more, and it can be awfully embarrassing for kids. I've seen that happen in schools, Mr. Minister. It's not something I'm making up. Kids start to look for courses that don't charge extra fees, because they can't afford it. For some low-income parents, if they happen to have two or three kids in high school, it can be a severe financial handicap to have kids in school. So I don't think it's appropriate. I also don't think it's appropriate because it's creating friction in local communities. We know that some rural boards — St. Paul, Sturgeon, and Yellowhead — are taking parents to court. But what I am saying most of all is that it impedes the idea of education that I believe the minister believes in: equal access to education. I believe it impedes that. As user fees possibly go up with the recession, it will impede it even more.

Mr. Chairman, to the minister: I think we're foolish in the long haul if we believe we're saving money by cutting back.

You may say I'm still naive, but I believe that if you have good, caring teachers — and we would agree with that — with small classes, they can do wonderful things with those kids. But if you have huge classes and you have burned out teachers, you are going to pick up the costs later on. I suggest that we can either put money into a decent education or later on we can put it in welfare, jails, unemployable people, and all the rest of it.

I know that may be a simplistic analogy, but I believe it is true. Mr. Chairman, that does not mean that we should automatically throw money at a problem and it's going to go away. But I think we have to recognize that the good, quality education the minister wants is going to cost money.

The minister's own task force went around the province and suggested to the minister that 85 percent of it should be picked up by the government. I recognize the minister's problem with that. There would have to be some limits on the other end, because without some limits any board that wanted to could keep spending and it would mainly come from the provincial government. But surely by setting limits we could move toward that goal. I'm convinced we could do that.

The other thing is finance, Mr. Chairman. I'm going to conclude with a few remarks, and then ask some specific questions of the minister. I'm often amused because the minister keeps quoting figures about how everything is wonderful in Alberta, and how we spend the most and are overly generous. I'd like to compare some figures I have with the minister. They're slightly different from what he is saying.

First of all, let me say that provincial funding has not kept up with inflation even during the boom years of the 1970s. That comes from the Department of Education, from the Provincial Priority on Education. They make that claim. And that's what I'm saying: if there was fat, we've lost that fat and we're now into the lean. Interesting, though, from Statistics Canada: in 1982-83, Alberta spent 17.6 percent of the provincial budget on education. I remind the minister that that was eighth in the nation in terms of percentage expenditure. That comes from Statistics Canada, provincial and municipal finance 1983, page 60, if he wants to check it.

I might point out that it's gotten even worse. In 1981-82 we were doing much better. We had 19 percent of the provincial budget on education; then, we ranked seventh. So we've now gone down to 17 and eighth. Education remains the largest element, from this same [task] force, of the local government's budget. That's the point I was trying to make. More and more of the burden has been put on local government — some 32 percent — and that's the largest element of their budgets in Alberta.

The minister may be aware of some other figures. In 1982-83, Alberta spent \$775.76 per capita on education, ranked fifth in the country, yet Alberta had the highest per capita revenue generated through taxes, royalties, and federal transfer payments, some \$5,650 per capita. We had the most money coming in but, comparatively, we spent the fifth most on education. I move to the fact that the minister's task force recommended that the provincial share go up, and the minister seems to have rejected that particular study.

I have a number of questions. It would probably take too long to go through them all, but I'll leave the minister with five direct questions to begin with. Number one, why did the minister bother to constitute and fund a task force on school finances if he simply intended to dismiss its recommendations out of hand? I know the minister is going to say that he's bought some of the recommendations. But the key one for education — and the minister is well aware of it — is the 85

percent funding. I would suggest to him that that study was a waste of both time and money.

My second question: how many dollars must be spent by the department on reports about education before the minister gives increased funding for the educational system? I point out a number of studies in the school closure area that are good studies, but nothing is being done. Number three, what effects will the freeze of provincial per pupil grants have on the quality of education? The minister is basically saying that even with utility, transportation, and debt servicing costs rising, that's not going to have a serious impact on education. I would like him to comment on that.

My other question is more a political one, Mr. Chairman. Why is there a 77.7 percent increase in funds for the minister's office, vis-à-vis the 3.4 percent increase in provincial contributions for education? The fifth one that I'll leave for the time being: why is one-third of the assistance to school boards funded outside the school foundation program — \$821 million to the fund, \$285.6 million to special programs? What I am suggesting is that we're developing ad hocery, and I want to know why we don't have an overall, organized plan.

With those few scintillating remarks, Mr. Chairman — I don't think I was quite as lengthy as the minister — I will step down and let some other members have a chance to debate. I will wait with bated breath for the minister's reply.

MR. KOWALSKI: Actually it was my turn to speak some 30 minutes ago, and I thought I was being quite a gentleman in offering my rightful place in the speaking order to the Member for Edmonton Norwood. He really didn't let me down, although I certainly wouldn't go so far as to use the word "scintillating".

At the outset, Mr. Chairman, I think I'd like to throw some words back to the Minister of Education, words that I've heard him give. In particular, I want to remind him of some words he spoke on February 9, 1983, when he gave a speech to the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. At that time the minister said:

I want to emphasize that I believe in our teachers, I believe in this community [of education], and I believe in [the total spectrum] of education. I believe that we can and will improve educational opportunities and outcomes. I believe that we will improve the effectiveness, the efficiency and the economy of the system. I expect that we will do this because we have no choice.

So I'm a bit bemused, Mr. Chairman, and a bit confused as well, in terms of the onslaught put forward by the Member for Edmonton Norwood, who basically said: why have all these studies, these debates, these discussions and what have you, and where are we really going?

I quite honestly can't understand how we can possibly take a look at education in 2000, 2010, 2015, 2020, or whatever it may be, without having a massive debate going on at the moment. The opening remarks provided to us by the Minister of Education a little earlier basically said that we have to get on with business, and we have to do some things. It's really getting things accomplished that I think the debate this morning with respect to his estimates is all about.

Essentially, Mr. Chairman, we have to demonstrate some leadership in this whole question of education. We have to do it essentially through communications of a whole variety of mechanisms. There are a variety of matters that have already been initiated in our current discussion today, but I have a concern I want to raise at this point with respect to what we want to do on the question of education. I ask that the Minister of Education respond to me when he has an opportunity to do that.

It essentially deals with the great tradition we seem to have in our society; we seem to be more tradition oriented than future oriented. It seems that every time you want to sit down with a group of people and say where do we want to go, and what accomplishment do we want to have, and what goal we are going after, you find an initial resistance that is based on custom and tradition. Of all the status quo oriented institutions we have in our society, the whole question of education is perhaps one that seems to meet with the greatest amount of resistance when you want to say, what is the objective we want to move toward? I would ask the Minister of Education to comment a little later and suggest to me how he really believes we are going to be able to tackle all the problems we currently have before us, and how we're going to reach those goals for change and those new reflections we want to arrive at, bearing in mind the tradition-oriented past of most of the people who are involved in the education environment in our province today.

That is not relegated simply to one of the various communities within the community; it applies to all of us. Certainly when I stand here as a member of this Legislative Assembly. I stand as more than simply a member of the Legislative Assembly. I stand as a parent, I stand as a former teacher, and I guess I stand as one who sleeps with a teacher on a regular basis. One has to be cognizant that he's more than simply one person; he's a variety of persons. [interjections] She's a delightful person; she's my wife.

There's no doubt at all that when we take a look at everything that is happening, surely the Member for Edmonton Norwood appreciates the intense direction being taken by the current Minister of Education with respect to a series of studies under way. I want to make mention of the finance task force. There's no doubt at all that the merit of that task force can never be misunderstood or underestimated. Essentially, a group of fine people decided we should take a look at education in our environment today and how it's funded. I think the reality of the whole debate is essentially the realization that over the last number of years there has been a shift — a debatable shift — of the specific numbers in terms of the decrease, as a percentage of provincial funding, and the increase, as a percentage of local school board funding. The fact of the matter is that the realities in terms of dollars have seen a fairly rapid escalation over the last 12 or 13 years with respect to this whole question. However, that doesn't decrease whatsoever the continued need to take a look at some formula that could basically see some type of standardization of commitment to education throughout the whole province of Alberta.

I have a concern, as a rural member who represents a number of school boards; namely, the school board that functions in the county of Barrhead and in the town of Barrhead, the school board that functions in the municipal district of Westlock, the county of Lac Ste. Anne No. 28. ID 15, and in the town of Swan Hills. It's of considerable interest, when one takes a look at the assessment dollars available per pupil in each of those school boards and the varying degrees of assessment dollars made available per pupil on a provincewide basis, that there is a [inaudible] down and in the end reflection in terms of what is available for basic educational support throughout the province of Alberta. I think it's important that all members — including the Minister of Education, when I provide him with some statistics — appreciate that there is an impact, and it's a concern that we have to be addressing ourselves to.

I think all members might want to make a mental note of some of these comments. As an example, the county of Barrhead, No. 11, had 2,329 students in the last year. It has an assessment factor per pupil of \$20,410, and it's cost per pupil for the delivery of education, less the transportation and the

early childhood services cost, was \$3,406. Just a few miles away, you have the Westlock school division. It has an assessment per pupil of \$23,908, and its cost per pupil, less transportation and early childhood services factors, was \$2,988.

Then, Mr. Chairman, you have to look elsewhere in the province. The Fort McMurray school district No. 2833 has an assessment per pupil of nearly three times plus what is available to the two municipalities I just mentioned. Fort McMurray has an assessment per pupil of \$68,278. The direct reflection of all of that is that they are in a position to expend \$4,923 per pupil for education, less the cost of transportation and early childhood services. If you look at the city of Edmonton, you see an assessment per pupil of \$62,362. That affords them an opportunity to provide a level of education, expend more dollars per pupil — I'm not sure there's any more quality education — than what might be located just a few miles north in rural Alberta. If you look at the Medicine Hat school board, their assessment per pupil is \$99,395 per pupil.

That is only one factor we can look at. We can also take a look at the supplementary requisition per pupil in that same time. In the county of Barrhead, in that last year I talked about, it was \$783. In the Westlock school division, it was \$624. But in the Fort McMurray school district, it was \$2,784. In the city of Edmonton, the Edmonton school district, it was \$1,476. In Medicine Hat the supplementary requisition per pupil in 1982 was \$2,007.

Quite clearly, Mr. Chairman, there are differences throughout the province of Alberta. There are differences that really relate themselves into the amount of dollars the local school jurisdiction has. That directly relates in terms of the kinds of expenditure levels various school jurisdictions throughout our province are then in a position to provide quality education to.

The difficulty with all of this is that I quite frankly believe the school system in the town I live in is second to none in the province of Alberta. The dollars per child expended on education are \$3,406. If I believe that we have one of the finest quality education systems in the province of Alberta, then much that I've said about the dollars available to other school boards in other parts of the province of Alberta leads me to the conclusion that there's something amiss here. I'm not sure what it is, but I'm going to leave that little dilemma with the Minister of Education and invite him to comment on that a little later.

Is it in fact fat administration, unnecessary programming, and a Cadillac facility and system? I'd hate to think we're being penalized in some regard in rural Alberta because of our efficiencies. I think that's part of the debate that has to come in with respect to the estimates of the minister. Quite frankly, I think it's just a bit easy for someone to conclude that you simply provide more dollars, and more dollars will translate into quality educational systems. I guess I can't be hypocritical in the sense of saying, on one hand, that in the community I live in, I think their educational system is second to none, and then standing up and demanding increasing amounts of dollars from the Minister of Education for 1984-85.

Mr. Chairman, there has also been a bit of confusion with respect to the announcement made by the Minister of Education in January 1984, when he outlined the basic funding plan of the provincial government for basic education in the 1984-85 fiscal year. I've heard my colleague from Edmonton Norwood talk about zero percent. The reality, of course, is that there has been much more than zero percent. I guess that is called selective analysis of a two-page document that came down at a given time.

While it's quite true that there was zero percent allocated in terms of the basic per pupil grant level in 1984 as compared to 1983, and that, in essence, quickly related to no additional

funds for salaries and benefits. I think it should also have been expected that someone as responsible as my good friend from Edmonton Norwood might also have talked about some of those other very important expansions to the basic educational funding plan for 1984 that are so important to so many of us who have to deal with people on an ongoing basis. In the quick reading that I have given to it, our plan for 1984-85 basically provides for a 13.3 percent increase over the 1983-84 capital estimates for continuing ongoing capital commitments — not zero percent, 13.3 percent.

This budget also responds in a pretty direct way to the special needs of children that have been identified in previous debates in this Legislative Assembly and, without any doubt, in terms of meetings that those of us who serve on various committees on education have heard from and dealt with in meeting with a variety of the important user groups in the province of Alberta — a 2 percent increase for special needs of children.

It's extremely important as well that I acknowledge with thanks a basic adjustment that took place with the equalizing grant and its impact on a number of poorer rural boards in the province of Alberta. In essence, there was a 7 percent increase in this equalizing grant, and that has been of significant benefit to the boards I represent, who, from a statistical point of view I guess, fall into the category of having less than average ability to pay. That has been a significant benefit to those boards I've talked about as well.

One of the prime concerns I have in dealing with people on an ongoing basis from an educational perspective is a concern with respect to transportation. We have a way of life in our province that has seen us build roads, improve quality of roads, and improve delivery of services in our larger rural/urban centres. Over the years, that has allowed large numbers of people to basically say, we want to go to the school located in the larger populated centre rather than to the smaller school we used to have here in our little rural community. And I guess that's the whole question of school closure.

As a member of this Assembly, I've had to deal with that matter also — two specific examples over the last several years, and I have another one that will soon be up for debate in 1984-1985. It's a very difficult problem to deal with; on the other hand, it's a problem that has to be dealt with. I think it's impossible for people to suggest that we can maintain a quality level system of education for only a handful of students in a small locale. Those children will be the losers in the long run. They have to have access to the socialization aspect that's so important for all people who live in a responsible society. They also have to have access to the quality type of education that can only be provided in a larger environment.

The commitment made by the minister in January and now followed through in his budget with respect to adjusting the weighting factors that have a direct response on how many children sit in a row of seats in a school bus, has been of significant benefit to the people of rural Alberta. Rather than have three children share a bench on a bus, that in essence now translates into two children sharing a series of seats on a bus.

Mr. Chairman, I have one other major item before I make additional comments. We need to get a response from the Minister of Education with respect to the changing demographics in our society. Alberta is not unique in that regard. Today approximately one in 10 Canadian citizens is a senior citizen, and I think that proportion as a percentage of the population relates to Alberta as well. For the target area the minister wants us to aim toward for the year 2010 or 2015, the percentage of senior citizens in our population is going to increase dramatically between now and then. In fact some of the best guesses are that by the year 2010, which is not more than 25, 26, 27

years from now, less than the age of a generation, we may have as many as two out of five, or 40 percent of our population, in the category of senior citizens.

The percentage of children we have in our society will then decrease. In fact if you look at the number of children we had in Alberta schools in 1971 and compare their absolute numbers in 1983, over a period of 12 years their numbers have not wavered in any significance whatsoever. There are approximately 425,000 students in our schools in Alberta today. That is basically the same number that were in our schools in 1971, yet our population, on a provincial basis, increased 50 percent over that 12 years.

There is no doubt at all that if we take a look at the overtures made to education by our government as a result of the concerns of all the people of this province, not only the concerns of the people who have children at the grades 1 to 12 level — if you take a look at the expansion of the university system in this province over the last 12 years, look at the expansion of the technical school system over the last 10 years, look at the expanding interest and enthusiasm people have had for adult and ongoing education over the last 12 years in this province — in essence the great debate for the next 25 years is going to be whether or not the K to 12 sector of education is going to be able to maintain its current percentage of a total provincial budget. That is going to be a very difficult fight. It should never be a political fight. It should be a sociological reaction to the realities of what is happening in society.

Quite recently I had the fortunate experience of being able to provide words to the 10th anniversary of the Barrhead further education council. The Barrhead further education council is the direct result of a commitment made by that local school board to expand its horizons in education and to provide further education to adults in our community. It's the same board; the board that looks at children in school from grades 1 to 12 is now also beginning to look at the provision of education for adults in the community. Incredibly, while that community has a population of only 3,825 people, over the last 10 years that further education council has provided courses to 5,000 adults. Of course many of those adults are moms and dads who have children in the system.

I applaud the ongoing commitment made by the Minister of Education to tackle issues that sometimes are not as easy to tackle as one might perceive them to be. I think the attack that he's taken and the response he's made to some sociological problems that led to the creation of the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, is unique and very important. We have not yet had a report from the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding, and I anticipate we'll probably be getting a copy of the report by the fall of 1984. Undoubtedly there are going to be recommendations contained in that report which are going to have an impact on the whole review that is currently being undertaken with respect to Alberta's junior and senior high school programs and of course the upcoming review of the School Act that will be done in a major way.

I've heard it said from time to time — and I think the Minister of Education should comment on this, Mr. Chairman — why aren't teachers involved in some of these major, active, ongoing reviews. I'm not sure that you have to be a fully functioning person in a school system on the day you are appointed to that committee, or you may have had a background in education in the past — that that really precludes you from having a view, a position, a perspective on education. I'm not so sure that people who are actively involved in a profession should be actively involved directly in the total review that is going on. With respect to the School Act, I just comment now that I am a former educator. I've been away from the classroom

for a few years. I don't know if that makes me an ex-teacher, period.

MR. MARTIN: A has-been.

MR. KOWALSKI: I may be a has-been, as the Member for Edmonton Norwood said. That would also put me in the same category as him. [interjections]

I think we've got very, very committed individuals in this Assembly who are cognizant of all the aspects of education, and the fact that they are not teaching on a day-to-day basis should not preclude their involvement. The test we have all given to ourselves is that we had to go and seek a mandate from the people. They have had to express themselves in a very secret, democratic way. They basically said, we want you to be there for us, now and in the future.

I've commented on the ongoing reviews that are under way. I've commented on the Committee on Tolerance and Understanding. I've talked about Alberta's junior and senior high school programs and the School Act. I think it's also extremely important that the Minister of Education be prepared, not really today but at a future time, to tie in all the concerns we have with respect to education and Bill 105, the Child Welfare Act. We talk about the cruelties that are provided to children. I note that the word "education" is not listed in the Child Welfare Act to the degree that it should be. It may very well be that the direction and response in dealing with this is that we'll have to include in the new school Act certain additional governances and criteria for the protection of children. Maybe that's the more rightful place those governances and protections should be, rather than in the Child Welfare Act. I think that's an area I would respectfully ask the Minister of Education to make some comments on.

The minister publishes reports, and the great difficulty in all of this is that we have to keep up with the comments in all these reports. From time to time there are some very, very specifics. I think it's important as well that the minister not leave this debate on his estimates without bringing us up to date with respect to the whole question of the computer report. He will recall that some months ago there was a debate in the Legislative Assembly on the future utilization of computers and how they would affect and relate themselves to career orientation of younger people. I think that is a response I really need. I sit as one basically saying that a computer is simply a machine. It will not govern me, nor will it govern all of society. We will govern it and use it as a tool to make us all a little more efficient and effective.

There are some, however, who believe that we should rapidly go out and buy millions and millions of dollars of computers and give everybody a computer and they'd somehow pack it on their backs as they go around the playground. I'd rather have children socializing and playing with one another than having a war with one another over computer utilization and computer time. But that's a personal point of view. Having said that, I just recently went out and bought one.

Mr. Chairman, I have one additional comment to make, and it deals with this whole question of finance. It's really a direct reflection and a direct reaction to what the Member for Edmonton Norwood has basically said. He's essentially told us that because there's zero percent allocated to salaries, wages, and benefits in the 1984-85 year, that will make a large number of our competent teachers less competent. I simply do not buy that. I have an advisory group made up of teachers, principals, and friends who advise me on educational matters on an ongoing basis. In fact some months ago they basically said, maybe we can be in a position to show some leadership. I do not

believe for a moment that the Member for Edmonton Norwood is going to become less effective in 1984 than he was in 1983 I really don't believe he will. I may be wrong, and he may have many opportunities to prove that to me. But I think I should point out to him that he as a member of this Legislative Assembly has shown some leadership — or will when the Bill comes up — in agreeing to zero percent. And I'll look forward to seeing him vote with all the members of the government caucus in support of that particular Bill. That will call for zero percent guidance and zero percent leadership, and I'm going to look forward to him responding to that. I think all of us — as a former teacher, in fact, I've basically said I'm prepared to do that. My wife got mad at me for a few minutes, but I suggested to her that it was a difficult problem and we'd have to work it out.

AN HON. MEMBER: That was a normal day.

MR. KOWALSKI: That's not an abnormal day.

Mr. Chairman, I want to draw one other matter to the attention of the Minister of Education, and that deals with the debate held in this Assembly on March 27 of this year as a result of a motion put forward to all members of the Assembly by the Member for Ponoka, a former president of the Alberta Teachers' Association. He introduced a motion into the Legislative Assembly that asked the Assembly to express its recognition of the importance of agriculture in our economy and the need to stress the importance of agricultural education. While the motion basically talked about community colleges and postsecondary education, a number of members of the Assembly took an opportunity to talk about the lack of attention our school curriculum provides to one of Alberta's primary resource industries, agriculture.

In particular I'd like to draw his attention not only to the motion that was put forward that day but to the words that were expressed by a number of people during that debate. There were a number of members who basically said that part of the curriculum we have in this province, one segment of it, one type of course, might be addressed to the role of agriculture in our economy. The course we currently have is absolute garbage. Anybody who was born on a farm and takes that course, laughs at it, rolls over, and says there's something wrong with it. I think that's an area we have to spend more time taking a look at. I am undoubtedly going to be pretty actively pursuing that when we take a look at the total review of the junior and secondary high school system of studies.

In the speech I gave on March 27, I put out a challenge to the Alberta Teachers' Association and suggested in my text that they had a responsibility in this area as well. I indicated at that time that the ATA has very, very proficiently and professionally created a number of specialist councils to deal with a whole series of areas of course study. I have invited them to take a look at the possibility of creating a specialist council to look at agricultural education, not only for the students of rural Alberta but for the students of urban Alberta.

Mr. Chairman, I anticipate getting back into the estimates of the Minister of Education as we go through some of the specifics. At this point in time, I wish to say thank you.

MR. ANDERSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like to participate in this afternoon's debate on the estimates of the Department of Education and say that in my personal opinion, education is at a crossroads. It is at a very difficult time in the evolution of education worldwide and certainly as far as our province goes. I believe there are three main reasons for that. The first is that rapid occupational mobility and technological change cause

some difficulties. In addition there are the demographic questions that were raised so well by the hon. Member for Barrhead, the projections and the difficulties we're going to encounter as a result of the changing age breakdowns of our society. Third, there is the current economic downturn, which causes a temporary re-evaluation of the objectives and goals we have with respect to education in the province. Mr. Chairman, with respect to those three items, recognizing the difficulties we have in this Assembly in dealing with education, I have to say that the Minister of Education and those teachers, department officials, and parents who were involved, have done an excellent job adapting to the difficulties that have taken place and to the rapid change that is affecting us quite dramatically.

Occupational mobility and technological change have indeed been looked at by the department in a number of areas. I think that a study of gifted children relates more to that area than it would seem to on the surface, inasmuch as it is more important to look at that particular area as we move rapidly and as we attempt to deal with the shifts in occupational desires and goals. The study on computerization is of course a direct answer to some of the concerns dealing with technological development.

The secondary review, which has been announced by the minister, is one that's badly needed in my opinion. At this point we have to constantly evaluate what we're trying to do with education, particularly in the secondary areas, and answer the questions and concerns that are there. In his closing remarks, I would ask the minister to perhaps clarify further the particular way in which citizens might further input into that secondary review process. For example, will they have an opportunity to make presentations to the advisory group he's announced? If not, will they be able to submit reports and ideas? People in my constituency, in particular, have an interest in making their opinions known in some way on that secondary review. Those comments would apply as well to the review of the School Act, which is a concern to a number in my constituency.

I think the provincewide evaluation, which is beginning and has to some extent taken place with the reintroduction of what I — being one who came through such a system — call departmental examinations, has gone relatively smoothly. There have been some concerns expressed in my constituency, some specific areas in which students have been concerned at the effect of those exams. But I think they are going relatively well and will add to the ability of our society to evaluate education in general and, more specifically, to evaluate the abilities of students as they move on to further educational goals or career opportunities.

I believe the whole area of evaluation should continue, in a very precise way, to monitor as well how we are adapting to technological change. I would be interested in the minister's comments on how that element is going to be brought into the evaluation. Are we changing rapidly enough to deal with the occupational needs of the people, the changing life-styles, and the technologies we are going to have to live with and be able to appropriately exploit in years to come?

With respect to the demographic projections, I won't repeat the comments that were made so well by the Member for Barrhead. I believe that in a general sense those speak for themselves. But there is a specific application today that is of serious concern for the citizens of Calgary: that is, in inner-city communities there are declining enrollments, whereas on the outskirts of the city of Calgary, in particular — and, I am sure, for the city of Edmonton as well — there has been some rapid growth in recent years that has caused pressure for more schools.

I very seldom associate my remarks with those of the Member for Edmonton Norwood. We have a philosophical differ-

ence on many, and one might say most, issues. But with respect to the question of school closures, I think the remarks the hon. member made today were most appropriate in almost every respect. The one caveat I would place on that is that I believe he perhaps didn't emphasize as much as I would like to, the need for local school boards to deal more appropriately with that issue, to investigate options to a greater extent. But I agree with him that while the minister has personally encouraged a look at alternatives to closing schools in inner-city communities, and while I know he has stood, throughout his term as Minister of Education, for the community school concept, I believe we need to do more to make resources available to those local boards in defining the options. I think we need to make easily available the research that is there as to what options can be considered.

For some time I have believed that indeed in most cases — most definitely not in all — smaller schools can add as much to the education of children as the benefits of the larger, massive educational facilities. I know there is a different philosophy on that in different areas, but that is a strong belief of mine. Of course a point is reached where education does not become viable or particularly effective if the enrollment is extremely small. But in most cases where closure has been proposed in my constituency, that enrollment base has not been reached. I believe the board has not considered the options, and I personally believe we could do more from our Department of Education to develop those options that should be considered by local boards. Indeed the decision should be theirs and has to be theirs, but I think we need to help provide the resources. I congratulate the Member for Edmonton Norwood for the comments he made in those areas, and add my voice to his request to the minister for an evaluation of those options.

I believe that tied with that is a need to look at the whole vehicle by which we make educational decisions in the province. I made comments with respect to that during the throne speech debate, and I make them again. With the review of the School Act — which I congratulate the minister on moving ahead with — we must, as a high priority for the city of Calgary, and I suspect for the city of Edmonton, look at the vehicle by which we make educational decisions. We defined those school boards at a time when our communities were much smaller, when the decisions were much easier, when schools were not so vast and so well funded, and when education was probably a lower priority than it is today. I personally believe that it's an outdated, outmoded way of making educational decisions in the city of Calgary.

There's no way that the trustees, elected from a list of anywhere between 25 and 35 people and representing over half a million people in the city at large, can properly relate to their constituents *en masse*. More importantly, the parents cannot relate directly to the trustees in a given area for the decisions that need to be made. So be it a ward system or a restructuring of the school board so that there are several, there has to be some way in which the elected representatives dealing with educational problems in the city of Calgary — and again I say I suspect, although I don't want to presume, in the city of Edmonton — have a way of more closely relating to the people that are there. For me that's a major priority in the School Act review, and I hope members of that advisory committee will look seriously at the options involved there.

Mr. Chairman, I don't have too many other comments with respect to education. We could get into philosophy and direction. I believe we need to be looking, especially in this time of economic restraint when we need to evaluate demographic projections and needs of the future, at the most innovative ways possible of dealing with education. I think that in particular we

should look at the type of system that exists at a school like Bishop Carroll in my riding, where individuals are encouraged to learn at their own rate of ability, where there are not classrooms and teaching in the traditional sense but where resources are given to individuals and a strict agreement is worked out with the teachers and other assistants to develop a learning pattern that suits the individual person.

I think that today, when things are changing so quickly and people's abilities are varying so greatly and we are in a situation where an individual will change occupations several times in a lifetime, even more than before an individualized approach to learning should be considered and encouraged in our system. I realize that in many respects that requires a whole new way of thinking, and that it couldn't happen overnight with our system. There are some experiments going on in that regard. Bishop Carroll being one of the more successful I've seen. I think we should look at that, in terms of how we might apply at least aspects of it to our overall system. I would encourage it at younger grades, so that people develop the ability to learn on their own as they go through the educational system, and then from there through life in a more direct sense. I would encourage more study of that kind of system, more encouragement from the Department of Education in that regard.

Having made those comments, none should be taken to suggest that there has not been an excellent job done in terms of planning in areas of education on the part of the government and particularly the minister. He is courageous in undertaking this secondary review and the School Act review for the first time in many years. It's a major direction, a major attempt to look at this conjunction of the problems we have to deal with in today's changing society. I wish all those who have been appointed to advisory committees the best in that regard.

Again I'd ask the minister to define further, if he's able to at this time, the process by which community groups, in particular parents' associations, can get involved with that direction. I believe that's important, but congratulate him on those directions.

Mr. Chairman, with those remarks I would pass on to the next speaker.

MR. DEPUTY CHAIRMAN: Due to the hour, I wonder if the Government House Leader wants to make the necessary motion or go on to another speaker.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Chairman, out of that very considerate regard we all want to have not to seem to limit any speaker who has only a few minutes before 1 o'clock, I move that the committee rise, report progress, and ask leave to sit again.

[Motion carried]

[Mr. Speaker in the Chair]

MR. PURDY: Mr. Speaker, the Committee of Supply has had under consideration certain resolutions, reports progress thereon, and requests leave to sit again.

MR. SPEAKER: Having heard the report and the request for leave to sit again, do you all agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, if I could beg the indulgence of the House, while we were in Committee of Supply I indicated that I would like to file some information for members of the Assem-

bly. Since that can't be done in Committee of Supply, I ask the opportunity to do it now.

MR. SPEAKER: Is it agreed?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

MR. SPEAKER: It is so ordered.

MR. KING: Mr. Speaker, I'd like to file for the Assembly a survey on student fees that was conducted by the regional offices of Alberta Education in November 1983: a news release and provincial evaluation policies in the areas of student, teacher, program, school, and system evaluation: and a synopsis of the management and finance plan of Alberta Education, dated January 10, 1984.

MR. CRAWFORD: Mr. Speaker, on Monday afternoon in Committee of Supply we propose to return to the estimates of the Department of Transportation. If there is further time in the afternoon, we will call the Department of Culture. The Assembly will sit Monday evening, and Executive Council will be called. I will give further guidance on Monday as to whether or not the Assembly need sit on Tuesday evening.

Mr. Speaker, I move we call it 1 o'clock.

MR. SPEAKER: Does the Assembly agree?

HON. MEMBERS: Agreed.

[At 12:55 p.m., pursuant to Standing Order 4, the House adjourned to Monday at 2:30 p.m.]